



Speech by

LINDY NELSON-CARR

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard 15 October 2003

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (12.00 p.m.): I rise in support of the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2003 which amends the 11 health portfolio acts and one health portfolio regulation. These acts include the Chiropractors Registration Act 2001, the Optometrists Registration Act 2001, the Physiotherapists Registration Act 2001 and the Podiatrists Registration Act 2001. They are to remove broad statutory definitions restricting practices to particular professions and to replace these with specific practice restrictions.

Other acts, including the Dental Practitioners Registration Act 2001, the Dental Practitioners Registration Regulation 2001, the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthesis Registration Act 2001 and the Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999, aim to incorporate the recommendations of the national competition policy review on the restrictions on the practice of dentistry.

The Health Act 1937 is to empower the chief executive of Health rather than the Governor in Council to appoint medical inspectors, health officers and other officers. The Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999 will give effect to the health practitioners tribunal's decision from the date it is delivered by the tribunal or is otherwise ordered. The Health Rights Commission Act 1991 will enable referral of public interest issues to registration boards after conciliation.

Of the final two acts, the Health Services Act 1991 will provide more flexible membership requirements for district health councils and the Nursing Act 1992 will provide a greater degree of public protection to achieve greater consistency. This legislation is all about providing protection for health service consumers and greater certainty to registered providers. It will protect the interests of the public. It will keep consumers well informed and at the same time it will uphold professional standards.

I turn my attention to something that is of particular interest to me, which is the amendments to the Hospitals Foundations Act 1982. The minor amendments to be moved today by the minister will clarify that two or more hospital foundations may amalgamate. The amendments have been progressed in response to a request from the Royal Brisbane Hospital Research Foundation and the Royal Women's Hospital Research and Development Foundation. These foundations have sought the minister's approval to amalgamate so that they may streamline their operations.

The amendments set out the steps to be undertaken for the amalgamation of two or more foundations and provide certainty about assets and bequests made to the amalgamating foundations. While the amendments primarily support administrative processes, they have required careful consideration to ensure the legal issues involved. There are currently 12 foundations throughout Queensland and these foundations are not-for-profit organisations that play an important role in promoting research and the delivery of high quality health services. The foundations achieve this through private donations, through corporate sponsorship and support, and through fundraising events. Key contributions that hospital foundations make include funding research initiatives to advance our understanding of disease and health care, supporting the training of health professionals, purchasing life-saving diagnostic and therapeutic health equipment, and supporting and playing an active role in health promotion. These amendments will ensure that hospital foundations can position themselves to effectively carry out this important work.

Finally, yesterday I spoke in this House about the Townsville Hospital and the number of occasions that service was performed in a 12-month period. People have to question the legitimacy of sensational drivels when confronted with positive figures like those that I delivered in this House

yesterday. One unfortunate story can do irreparable damage to a system which produces excellent outcomes and results on a daily basis. How damaging to morale is it? As the minister mentioned this morning, the damage to morale is huge. Not only that, it is immeasurable and reprehensible.

Let me say that since we came to office we have delivered record health budgets. The current health budget is \$4.63 billion, up almost \$2 billion up on the 1997-98 budget. This government has committed to increasing the annual health budget by \$1 billion over the next four years. Funding to the Townsville health service district has increased by \$16.6 million. The 2003-04 budget is in excess of \$208 million.

I am last also pleased to advise that a director of medical oncology and a director of haematology recently commenced duties at Townsville. A second full-time oncologist will commence in January 2004. Yesterday I also made mention of the fact that the emergency department throughout the Townsville health service district recorded 53,993 presentations during the last financial year. Let me add that the June quarter figures show that 100 per cent of category 1 emergency department patients at Townsville Hospital were seen immediately by a doctor. This 100 per cent record has been maintained for the past two years. The June quarter figures show that 85.7 per cent of category 2 patients were seen by a doctor within 10 minutes. The nationally accepted target is 80 per cent. Two years ago Townsville Hospital was seeing 53 per cent of category 2 patients on time. Clearly there has been a significant improvement in two years and I would like to thank all the hospital staff involved. In granting me this latitude, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you and I commend the bill to the House.